

# A new race of Thekla Lark in Bale, Ethiopia

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A study by one of us (R.N.), on the evolution of larks of the genus *Galerida*, led us to consider jointly the populations of *G. theklae* of the high plateaus of Ethiopia, until now considered as constituting the subspecies *praetermissa* (Blanford). Accordingly we have examined the material brought back by recent expeditions to Ethiopia organised by the Laboratoire de Zoologie (Mammifères et Oiseaux) du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris and that housed in the collections of the British Museum (Natural History). It is apparent to us that the birds of Bale are distinguishable from those from other high plateaus of Ethiopia, from which they are separated by the Rift Valley. They seem to constitute a discrete form, which we propose to call, in memory of our friend the late François Hüe:

*Galerida theklae hueti*, subsp. nov.

*Description:* This form has no close resemblance to *G. t. ellioti* Hartert or *G. t. barrarensis* Erard & Jarry (see immediately above), which are light coloured with a pronounced sandy tone. It is however near to *G. t. praetermissa* and *huriensis* Benson. In comparison with these two races, *hueti* has the streaking of the upperparts distinctly blacker and more intense (in worn plumage, the back and the top of the head appear almost uniformly black). The pale borders of the feathers of the mantle are narrower and lighter, more creamy or very light buff, less pinkish brown, this being particularly clear on the neck, where there is the outline of a pale band. The cheeks are likewise more intensely streaked than in *praetermissa*. On the underparts *hueti* is white, very slightly washed with light buff as in *huriensis*, whereas *praetermissa* is a dark pinky brown, only rarely pale in colour. The streaking of the chest, of a much less heavy aspect than in *huriensis*, is similar to that of *praetermissa*, but the streaks are heavier and more densely distributed. The throat is white as in *huriensis* but much less streaked; in *praetermissa* the throat is buffy. The beak of *hueti* is intermediate between that of *praetermissa* (long and slender) and that of *huriensis* (long and stout).

*Distribution:* *G. t. hueti* inhabits the mountains of Bale where it has been collected at Dinsho (7°06'N, 39°47'E) at an altitude of 3,200 m, and where the species is relatively common, inhabiting steppes and plains of a medium altitude (cf. Dorst & Roux 1972: 208).

We likewise attribute to *hueti*, although not identical in all characters, two specimens collected on 28th February 1971 at Asella (7°58'N, 39°04'E), in Arussi, at an altitude of 2,640 m, on the edge of degraded forest intersected by cultivation. They are in fresh plumage, with a very dark pigmentation, although the edges of the feathers of the mantle are more like those in *praetermissa* (that is, more pinkish brown) of the Addis Ababa plateau. On the other hand, the underparts are much as in *hueti*. The measurements of these two specimens are included below with those of that form.

It is probably also *hueti* which Dorst & Roux (1973) found well represented at Koffole (7°05'N, 38°45'E), in Arussi, on arid steppes at an altitude of 2,550 m.

*Type:* ♂ adult, Dinsho, 14th March 1968, specimen no. 24 collected by party composed of Prof. J. Dorst, F. Roux and J. Chauvency. In Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.

Measurements and weight of type: Wing 103, tail 54.5, bill (from skull) 17.5, hind-claw 11.5 mm. Weight 34 g.

Measurements and weights of material as a whole: We compare below only *praetermissa* and *buei*; for data for *buriensis*, *elliotti* and *barrarensis*, the other races recorded from Ethiopia, see Erard & Jarry above. The three items indicate respectively mean, range and number of specimens examined.

	Wing	Tail	Bill from skull millimetres	Hind-claw	Weight grammes
<i>G. t. praetermissa</i>					
♂♂	101.7	55.7	16.6	13.5	35.2
	97.5 - 107.5	49.5 - 60	15.5 - 17.5	11 - 16.5	32 - 39
	21	20	20	19	14
♀♀	95.3	51.2	16.1	13.1	34.0
	91 - 99	48 - 54	15 - 17.5	11 - 15.5	30 - 36
	5	5	5	5	3
<i>G. t. buei</i>					
♂♂	103.7	54.6	17.0	13.5	35.0
	101 - 107	52.5 - 57.5	16 - 18	11.5 - 15	34 - 37
	4	4	4	4	4
♀♀	96.5	51.0	—	14.3	33.3
	95.5 - 97	50 - 52.5	15	12 - 16.5	32 - 34
	3	3	1	3	3

Remarks: The existence of this dark form *buei* was foreseen by Friedmann (1937: 31), who remarked that the birds collected by the Childs Frick Expedition on the plateau of Arussi were blacker on the back and head than those of Shoa and that they "may represent an undescribed form". Friedmann refrained from naming it, not knowing the extent of individual variation in *praetermissa*; this all the more because Blanford (1870: 381) had named "*A. (G.) arenicola?* Tristram, var. *fusca*" a very dark specimen obtained at Ashangi (12°35'N, 39°39'E). It seems to us that *praetermissa* does show a certain variation in intensity of pigmentation. But in spite of an examination of the long series in the British Museum we have not found in this form any individual as dark and showing the characters such as we have given in the definition of *buei*.

Three specimens from the vicinity of Ambo (8°57'N, 37°58'E) collected in October 1971 between 2,200 and 2,400 m in altitude show a slight approach to *buei*. However, a careful examination shows that they are pale below, the pectoral striation is of the *praetermissa* type, being narrower and more diffuse than in *buei*, the throat is washed with light buffy, the upperparts are certainly dark but not to the extent found in *buei*, while the pale margins to the feathers of the mantle do not accord with this latter but rather with those in *praetermissa*.

#### References:

- Blanford, W. T. 1870. *Observations on the geology and zoology of Abyssinia*. London: Macmillan.  
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 Friedmann, H. 1937. Birds collected by the Childs Frick Expedition to Ethiopia and Kenya Colony. Part 2—passeres. *U.S. Nat. Mus. Bull.* 153: 506 pp.